

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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O R 261828Z NOV 75

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6941

INFO AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK IMMEDIATE

COMICEDEFOR IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY BONN IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY HELSINKI

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

SECDEF

CNO

CINCLANT

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 18256

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: EFIS, IC, UK, PFOR

SUBJ: ICELAND/UK FISHERIES DISPUTE

REF: (A) STATE 279402; (B) REYJKAVIK 1316

1. WE NOTE FROM REFTTEL A THAT CONSIDERATION IS BEING GIVEN IN WASHINGTON TO A HIGH-LEVEL APPROACH TO HMG CONCERNING THE ICELAND/UK FISHERIES DISPUTE. IN THE CONTEXT OF THAT POSSIBLE INITIATIVE, AND IN LIGHT OF THE PROGRESSIVE ESCALATION OF THE DISPUTE, THIS MESSAGE CONTAINS CURRENT EMBASQY ASSESSMENT OF UK ATTITUDES TOWARD THE PROBLEM AND RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING CONTENT OF SUCH A DEMARCHE.

2. WITHOUT QUESTION HMG SEES ITS PRESENT NEGOTIATING POSTURE IN THIS MATTER ONE OF UNASSAILABLE REASONABLENESS, AND ITS ONLY ALTERNATIVE SHORT OF COMPLETE CAPITULATION
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TO ICELAND, A CAPITULATION WHICH WOULD SEVERELY DAMAGE

THE BRITISH FISHING INDUSTRY. IT SHOULD BE REMEMBERED THAT THE BRITISH BELIEVE THAT THEY MADE SUBSTANTIAL CONCESSIONS TO ICELAND IN THE 1973 AGREEMENT, AN ACCORD WHICH SET A TARGET MF 130,000 TONS, DOWN FROM OVER 200,000 TONS CAUGHT BY BRITISH FISHERMEN IN THE LATE 1960S. FURTHER, THEY CONSIDER ROY HATTERSLEY'S PROPOSALS TO THE GOI IN REYKJAVIK NOVEMBER 16-17 AS EMINENTLY CONCILIATORY. DURING THOSE TALKS HATTERSLEY SUGGESTED: (1) THERE SHOULD BE AN ABSOLUTE LIMIT ON BRITISH CATCH, RATHER THAN AN INDICATIVE TOTAL; (2) THE MESH SIZE OF BRITISH NETS SHOULD BE INCREASED TO PRESERVE STOCK OF YOUNG FISH; (3) THE UK WOULD OFFER ITS GOOD OFFICES IN ICELAND'S FUTURE NEGOTIATIONS WITH EC9 (4) A BRITISH TOTAL ANNUAL CATCH OF 110,000 TONS PER YEAR FOR THE DURATION OF THE NEW AGREEMENT. MOREOVER, HATTERSLEY RECENTLY TOLD PARLIAMENT, "I MADE CLEAR THAT IF THE GOVERNMENT OF ICELAND MADE A FURTHER OFFER IN EXCESS OF 65,000 TONS, I WAS READY TO ADVANCE TOWARDS A MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE TOTAL. THE ICELANDIC FOREIGN MINISTER TOLD ME THAT HE HAD NO MANDATE TO IMPROVE ON THE OFFER OF 65,000 TONS." HATTERSLEY ADDED 110,000 TONS WAS A TOTAL TO WHICH HE WAS NOT IRREVOCABLY COMMITTED AND THAT HMG STOOD READY TO CONTINUE THE NEGOTIATIONS BECAUSE IT FIRMLY BELIEVED "FURTHER PROGRESS IS POSSIBLE". HATTERSLEY REPEATED THAT OFFER IN A NOVEMBER 26 PRESS CONFERENCE. THUS, IN EMBASSY'S VIEW, BRITISH GOVERNMENT SINCERELY BELIEVES IT HAS MADE EVERY EFFORT TO KEEP NEGOTIATIONS GOING AND SETTLE THE DISPUTE AMICABLY, AND GENUINELY REGRETS BEING FORCED BY ICELANDIC COAST GUARD AND BRITISH TRAWLER LOBBY TO SEND FRIGATES IN.

3. WE WOULD ALSO EMPHASIZE THAT WHILE THIS MATTER IS NOT A CENTRAL NATIONAL ISSUE HERE, THE HOUSE OF COMMONS IS UNIFORMLY BEHIND THE GOVERNMENT'S POSITION. IN FACT, THE ONLY CRITICISM IN THE COMMONS HAS COME FROM CONSERVATIVES AND LABOR BACKBENCHERS WHO HAVE URGED THE GOVERNMENT TO TAKE TOUGHER MEASURES TO PROTECT BRITISH FISHERMEN. EDITORIAL COMMENT IN BRITISH QUALITY NEWSPAPERS, "THE TIMES" AND "GUARDIAN" HAS URGED A NEGOTIATED COMPROMISE, EMPHASIZED MATTER MEANS MUCH MORE TO ICELAND THAN TO BRITAIN WHERE "ONLY" 10,000 JOBS ARE AT STAKE, AND POINTED OUT

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STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF KEFLAVIK TO NATO. SUCH ARGUMENTS, HOWEVER, HAVE NOT YET MOVED POLITICIANS HERE FROM THEIR NATIONAL AND THUS PAROCHIAL CONCERNS, NOR ARE THEY LIKELY TO.

4. HMG IS WELL AWARE OF POTENTIAL CONSEQUENCES FOR NATO IF "COD WAR" EVENTUATES. THAT AWARENESS WAS IMPORTANT FACTOR IN ITS RELUCTANCE TO DISPATCH THE FRIGATES. BUT

THAT RELUCTANAE WAS TEMPERED BY THE DESIRE TO SHOW ICELAND
THAT WITHOUT AN AGREEMENT, THE BRITISH NAVY WOULD ENSURE
THERE WOULD BE NO LIMIT ON THE OVERALL UK CATCH. IN THIS
REGARD WE DO DETECT A CERTAIN PREROGATIVE OF POWER IN UK

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 LONDON 18256

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BEHAVIOR ALTHOUGH IT IS NEVER OBVIOUSLY REFLECTED IN
THOSE TERMS BY BRITISH OFFICIALS. BENEATH THE SURFACE,
FOREIGN SECRETARY CALLAGHAN -- AND OTHERS IN GOVERNMENT--
MAY FEEL THAT WITH JUSTICE SO CLEARLY ON ITS SIDE, BRITAIN
HAS NOT ONLY THE RIGHT, BUT THE OBLIGATION TO MAKE CLEAR
THAT IT WILL NOT BE BULLIED BY A COUNTRY WITH A POPULATION
LESS THAN WEST LONDON. CALLAGHAN HAS VOICED PRIVATELY A
SIMILAR DISDAIN FOR LUXEMBOURG AND DISMISSED ITS IMPEND-
ING PRESIDENCY OF THE NINE. WE BELIEVE THAT HE, HATTERSLEY
AND MANY OF THEIR COLLEAGUES MAY NOT PSYCHOLOGICALLY BE
ABLE TO TREAT ICELAND AS A NEGOTIATING EQUAL.

THIS
WOULD EXPLAIN HATTERSLEY'S STYLE IN REYKJAVIK, REPORTED
REFTEL B. IN THIS PARTICULAR DISPUTE, BRITAIN DOES HAVE
THE POWER TO SUPPORT UNILATERALLY WHAT IT REGARDS AS ITS
NATIONAL INTEREST, AND IN 1975 THAT IS A RARE SITUATION
INDEED.
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5. THIS BRINGS US TO THE POSSIBILITY OF A HIGH-LEVEL US
DEMARCHE TO BRITISH GOVERNMENT. WITH ABOVE IN MIND, WE
STRONGLY AGREE WITH REFTEL A THAT WE SHOULD AVOID GETTING
INTO THE MIDDLE OF THIS DISPUTE. SUCH A MESSAGE COULD,
HOWEVER, REMIND UK THAT BECAUSE OF THE NATO LINK WE ARE
NOT DISINTERESTED IN THIS AFFAIR, URGE RESTRAINT, COMMEND
UK EFFORTS TO REOPEN THE NEGOTIATION, AND EXPRESS OUR HOP
THAT THOSE EFFORTS WILL BE CONTINUED. WE BELIEVE ANY
ATTEMPT TO BE MORE SPECIFIC, OR OFFER PRECISE SUGGESTIONS
TO THE BRITISH AS TO THE WAY OUT OF THE QUARREL WOULD
SOON DRAW US BETWEEN TWO ALLIED COMBATANTS.

6. WE WOULD MAKE ONE FINAL POINT. WE NOTE THAT REFTEL A
DOES NOT EXPLICITLY INDICATE US IS CONSIDERING HIGH-LEVEL
APPROACH TO ICELAND. IF WE GO IN TO THE BRITISH AND COUN-
SEL A MODERATION THEY BELIEVE THEY ARE ALREADY EXHIBITING,
THEY MAY ASK IF WE ARE ALSO MAKING AN APPROACH TO ICELAND.
DEPARTMENT WILL WISH TO CONSIDER WHETHER, IN THOSE CIR-
CUMSTANCES, AN AFFIRMATIVE ANSWER TO THAT QUESTION WOULD
MAKE US DEMARCHE TO BRITISH MORE EFFECTIVE.

RICHARDSON

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